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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0978
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2146
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6258
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4464
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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT -- June 24

Leading Stories

1. All dailies highlighted the first official visit to the United States by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, and focused on her meeting with President Obama in the Oval Office. Also widely reported were stories on the dramatic increase in the number of patients with respiratory diseases, including AH1N1 flu, which has placed unprecedented demands on hospitals and clinics in Chile.

Obama-Bachelet

2. All dailies ran front-page photographs of Presidents Obama and Bachelet at their joint press conference, highlighting that the U.S. President congratulated his Chilean counterpart on Chile's sound economic policies, and praised her as "one of the most compelling leaders that we have, not just in the hemisphere but around the world." Dailies emphasized incidental aspects of the bilateral meeting at the White House, such as Obama's relaxed manner, his "unprecedented" decision to take a question from a Chilean journalist, and his willingness to pose with the Chilean press in the Rose Garden.

3. Headline: "Obama praises Chile's economic management of the financial crisis"
Sub-headlines: The U.S. President praised Chile's policy to save the surplus from copper: "It's a good lesson for the United States. We squandered the surplus we had;" "President Obama is an idol for Chileans," said Bachelet, as the U.S. President said he would do everything possible to travel soon to Chile, before March 11, 2010."
(El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, 6/24)

4. One captioned photograph quotes President Obama: "If we look at how Chile has managed the recession, we can see it has done very well, in part because it saved the copper surplus." Another captioned photograph says, "The bilateral meeting was marked by praises." The article then outlines the order of events starting with Bachelet's arrival at the White House at 2:07 pm and the private 30-minute bilateral meeting, which was followed by an extended meeting with Bachelet's ministers of Finance, Energy and Foreign Affairs, and their U.S. counterparts. Both presidents then held a press conference, at which Bachelet said that "President Obama is an idol for Chileans." The U.S. President said he would make an exception and agreed to answer a question from a journalist on behalf of the Chilean press, as the security people began to lose patience and the international press corps watched perplexed. Today Bachelet will meet in private with Vice President Joe Biden and attend a Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) conference on human influenza, a topic that she and President Obama also discussed."

Front-page photo of both presidents (El Mercurio, 6/24)

¶5. Headline: "In a relaxed meeting, Obama praises Bachelet and promises to visit Chile." After the 35-minute private meeting, President Obama congratulated the Chilean authorities for their sound economic policies, which have enabled it to confront the financial crisis. The two presidents discussed the situation in the region, cooperation in the energy sector, and spent more time on the AH1N1." (La Tercera, conservative daily, 6/24)

¶6. Headline: "Bachelet and Obama in total Synchrony." Sub-headline: "U.S. President cites Chile's economic policies and leadership." "The good political, diplomatic and even personal relationship between the two presidents was definitely sealed. Two elements that appear to have contributed to this are Bachelet's leadership and the respect she enjoys in the Hemisphere, and the willingness of the White House to take a positive turn in its ties with the region. It is no minor issue that the Oval Office discussion centered on building bridges and triangular relations in Latin America and the Caribbean, where Chile can play a constructive long-term role." Front-page photograph of both presidents. (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, 6/24)

¶7. "The meeting between the two presidents was anything but conventional. Bachelet arrived at the White House confident that the bilateral meeting would yield positive results, because just a few hours earlier Obama had praised her as "one of the finest leaders in Latin America." (La Nacion, 6/24)

¶8. At the press conference, Bachelet confirmed that Obama said he would do "everything possible to travel to the region, hopefully before the end of her term in office, which is March 2010." (La Nacion, 6/24)

¶9. "In the South American context, where three ideological branches coexist -- progressive, extreme left and right - Obama and Bachelet called for ties of respect among neighbors." (La Nacion, 6/24)

¶10. Headline: "A hand for Brazil and Lula." Obama said that not sharing many of Bachelet's or Lula's policies does not prevent the three countries from having "a good working relationship to pave the way for the region." Bachelet said that she and Obama had agreed to continue working in "triangular relationships with other countries, in the understanding that Latin America's problems are mainly the result of poverty, health, and development problems." Bachelet said, "It has been a very good meeting and we will continue giving our support as a bridge for those countries that need support in an array of areas." (La Nacion, 6/24)

¶11. Chilean Energy Minister Marcelo Tokman and his U.S. counterpart, Stephen Chu, signed a memorandum for cooperation on non-conventional renewable energy. The agreement shows the importance that both governments attach to energy efficiency and renewable energy. (La Nacion; El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, 6/24)

¶12. There was nothing but praise in the White House. President Obama labeled Bachelet "one of the most interesting leaders in the hemisphere and the world" and congratulated her and her team for their sound economic management. The meeting between the two presidents was relaxed. This was evident in the press conference, where Obama made an exception and took a question from a Chilean journalist, then posed for a photograph in the Rose Garden with the Chilean press. (Diario Financiero, business and financial daily, 6/24)

¶13. Mutual praise and an open dialogue marked the bilateral meeting of Presidents Obama and Bachelet. "The relationship we have with Chile, with which, by the way, we do not concur on all foreign policy issues - is one of respect. That is the model we want: A partnership, where the United States does not tell Chile how to defend its own interests," said Obama. (Estrategia, business and financial daily, 6/24)

¶14. Headline: "Obama steps out of protocol and creates disorder in the White House." Impressive. The most powerful and charismatic world leader agreed to pose with the Chilean press in the Rose Garden, as if this were a special occasion for Facebook. And as

they posed, the U.S. President even announced a possible visit to Santiago. The U.S. press believes this could take place in October (Las Ultimas Noticias, leading-circulation popular daily, 6/24)

¶15. Making an exception, President Obama took a question from journalist Amaro Gomez-Pablos, who asked about the CIA's role in the coup that ousted [President Salvador] Allende in 1973. "I'm interested in looking forward, not backwards. The United States has been an enormous force for the good of the world, although we sometimes have made mistakes," responded Obama. (Las Ultimas Noticias, 6/24)

¶16. After the working meeting with President Obama, Bachelet said: "We have reaffirmed the enormous amount of values and principles that we share (...) We have seen with much happiness the importance that President Obama gives to the region, and especially to Chile, which he sees as a country that has done things well (...) We understand the way in which you [President Obama] are exerting your leadership. It is something that inspires us and makes us feel confident and comfortable." (Government of Chile webpage, 6/24)

Other Bilateral

¶17. The Independents Network is sponsoring a seminar at the University of Chile Government and Public Management School, offered by Sam Rodriguez, a political marketing expert in President Obama's presidential campaign. Chilean presidential candidates from all parties will attend. (El Mercurio, 6/24)

Military

¶18. The U.S., UK, Brazilian, French, and Chilean Navies will begin their participation in the Teamwork South 2009 exercises off the northern coast of Chile. (La Nacion, 6/24)

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